

A New Way to Surf

Were talking about web surfing that is. When the Internet came of age in the early 1990's Netscape Navigator was the web browser of choice. By 1995 Netscape was being used to surf the Internet by 80% of the Internet users. Microsoft quickly realized that they had a lot of ground to make up in the browser market. Unlike Netscape, Microsoft decided that their browser would be free. That decision proved to be all that was needed to propel Internet Explorer into the top spot. In 1998 Netscape announced a bold change to their browser. Netscape Navigator would both be free and offered as open source software. (Side note: open source software indicates that the software code can be modified by anyone as long as the finished product is offered for free.)

Unfortunately for Netscape their new program turned out to be too little too late. By the end of the 1990's Internet Explorer replaced Netscape Navigator as the number one web browser. At the end of the browser wars Internet Explorer became very complacent when it came to improving their web browser. This has paved the way for other browsers to challenge the top spot.

With only 5% of the market share, Mozilla is a strong newcomer. Mozilla offers a free browser named Firefox based of the open source code of Netscape. Firefox can be downloaded for free from [www. Mozilla.com](http://www.Mozilla.com).

Why Firefox? Firefox is a compact and a more secure browser alternative. Firefox doesn't include many features. This makes the browser faster and more secure from spyware attacks. In addition, since Firefox only accounts for about 5% of the Internet users it actually has a security advantage. Virus and spyware authors will primarily write their code to be effective on Internet Explorer because most web surfers still use that program. I suspect as time goes by and more users switch to Firefox you will find that it will become more of a target.

Since Firefox is based on open source software Mozilla has yet another advantage. Programmers love to take open source code and improve upon it. Mozilla has dozens of add-ons located on their site that can add calendars, spell checkers and more. In addition other vendors have add-on programs that can give you search bars, weather updates and volume controls right on the Firefox window.

Firefox may not be free from virus and spyware headaches forever, but it is a great alternative to your buggy Internet Explorer today. If you have technology related questions or need to have your computer repaired by a qualified computer technician call Thomas, Roger or Scott at the Computer Depot, 947-0749.